

New skills offer hope in post-Covid world

Education
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A programme tailored to ni-Vanuatu women on the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, is giving them the skills to adapt their businesses to a post-Covid world.

Entrepreneurial Women With Purpose (EWWP), an organisation designed to empower women through education, has designed a programme based on the needs, skills and passions of women in Marlborough on the RSE scheme.

On Friday, 12 women were given a tour of the nursery at Selmes Garden Centre by Trust Chairman David Robinson.

EWWP founder Catherine van der Meulen said the Impact Education Programme had held workshops over the past six weeks, focusing on skills the women could take back to their own communities and businesses in Vanuatu.

“We took what they were currently educated in, what they wanted to be educated [in], what their passions were, what their interests were, what their community needs were, and what their social issues were,” she said.

They had done classroom-style workshops such as financial literacy and forecasting, but also provided hands-on experience.

“One of the big things that came out was that they love to grow plants, and



Alicia Albert, left, pictured with Cindy Metsa and Isabel Ronnie, had a business cultivating kava in Vanuatu and is learning about new fruits and vegetables. SCOTT HAMMOND/STUFF

they love to grow food,” she said.

“This is showing them around not only how you grow plants, and what fruits and vegetables they can actually be growing, but also how they can create a business out of doing something that they love.”

Isabel Ronnie operated a transport business for women back in Vanuatu, but was looking to change her business model when she returned, as there would no longer be tourists.

“From now on with the Covid, it’s

too hard. Losing jobs and stuff so it’s better to change to something natural.

“I’m thinking of the needs of the locals — just something natural.”

Alicia Albert also had a business growing and harvesting kava, a plant brewed into a social drink. She was looking to learn about new fruits and vegetables she could cultivate to expand her business. Kathleen Kalo had a kava bar in Vanuatu and grew produce such as pineapple, bananas and sweet potatoes for her business.

INSIDE

Our Escape travel section has been rebranded to Stuff Travel. Today’s pages celebrate New Zealand’s ideal spring destinations.

Science

Understanding liquefaction

Scientists will start drilling deep into fertile Marlborough land today to gain new understanding of liquefaction in gravelly soils. Prior to the Kaikōura quake it was thought that only sandy soil liquefied, but the 2016 event also triggered the same natural phenomena in gravelly soil areas around Blenheim. The Earthquake Commission is funding research to understand how gravelly soil liquefies, and what can be done to minimise the risk. University of Canterbury’s Dr Gabriele Chiaro will focus on the liquefaction in Blenheim to deliver results that will be of international significance and said the work was crucial to help decision-makers. The first sites which would be tested were close to Lansdowne Park, where they would drill 15m below the ground surface to find out how strong the soil was.

Quake

Shaken but not stirred

A magnitude-5.7 earthquake near St Arnaud was felt right across the country. Geonet reported the “strong” earthquake struck at a depth of 62 kilometres about 10km west of St Arnaud at 10.13pm on Thursday. People reported feeling the quake from Auckland to Dunedin, with many at the top of the South Island and in Wellington saying they felt strong shaking. There were no reports of damage in St Arnaud village, with the timing of the shake coming as most residents were in bed. Nelson Lakes Motels owner Richard Leppard was one of those who slept through the event. He was first made aware of the shake when he received a text from a friend in Wellington. “We couldn’t work out what he was on about - it’s not unusual that people everywhere else seem to feel it more than we do here, I don’t know if it’s because we’re by a lake or something else, I’m not sure.”

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From page 1// Search for rental lasts over 12 months

“Every week I go to viewings, every week I get notifications on Trade Me for new places, and I apply for those... It’s a lot, driving to these houses every week, it takes up quite a lot of time.”

She believed high competition for rentals often encouraged landlords to charge high rents.

The number of houses for sale in Marlborough had also plummeted in the last year, with 162 homes listed in August, down 36.3 per cent from August, 2019.

Ministry of Social Development figures showed 132 people on the social housing register in June, 2019, which rose to 200 in June this year. Before 2016, the region’s

register never rose above 30.

Christchurch Methodist Mission director Jill Hawkey, whose organisation helped run BETHS in partnership with Crossroads Charitable Trust, said homelessness in Blenheim barely existed 10 years ago.

Now the town had one of the country’s highest rates of homelessness per capita.

She pointed to the FirstHomes initiative as a contributing factor, launched in Blenheim in 2013, which offered first-home buyers the opportunity to buy an “un-needed state house”.

At the time Marlborough was considered a low-demand area, and the

programme was intended to free up capital, to invest in new state houses in high-demand areas like Auckland and Christchurch, Hawkey said.

Housing New Zealand’s stock in Blenheim decreased from 434 properties in 2012, to 405 by 2017. As demand grew, so did the cost of renting, Hawkey said.

Marlborough’s median rent was \$350 a week in 2016, but reached \$420 in February this year.

A multi-agency response was needed and a regional strategy, bringing together the Marlborough District Council, Government agencies, iwi and other housing organisations, Hawkey said.

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